

Message Text

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TAGS: ETRD, ENRG, FR, UR

SUBJ: FRENCH INTEREST IN SOVIET OFF-SHORE PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT

REF:

MOSCOW 4497

1. IN VIEW OF REPORT REFTEL OF FRANCO-SOVIET DISCUSSIONS OF
OFF-SHORE OIL PROJECTS IN USSR, COMMATT ASKED FRENCH EMBOFF
WHETHER FRENCH WERE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN THIS POSSIBILITY.
FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT CFP AND ELF-ERAP WERE IN PRINCIPLE QUITE
INTERESTED. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT INITIAL DISCUSSIONS
IN MOSCOW DURING MARCH HAD REVEALED THAT SOVIETS WRE EXTREMELY
WARY OF ANY PROPOSALS FOR PARTICIPATION BY FOREIGN
SPECIALISTS IN BARENTS SEA OIL DEVELOPMENT. IN FACT, THEY
HAD PROPOSED THAT CFP/ELF-ERAP MAKE AVAILBLE EQUIPMENT AND
ALLOW SOVIETS TO DO NECESSARY EXPLORATORY, AND IF JUSTIFIED,
PRODUCTION WORK. FRENCH, ON OTHER HAND, DOUBT THAT SOVIETS
WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF EQUIPMENT INVOLVED,
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ALTHOUGH THEY UNDERSTAND SOVIET SECURITY CONCERNS IN VIEW FACT
THAT MOST PROMISING OIL AREAS ARE QUITE CLOSE TO ROUTE FOLLOWED

BY SOVIET SUBMARINES TRAVERSING NORTH CAPE.

2. SAS INDICATION OF SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO ALLOW FOREIGN SPECIALISTS TO TAKE PART IN OFF-SHORE SEISMIC WORK, FRENCH EMBOFF NOTED THAT FRENCH HAD RECENTLY SOLD SOVIETS A RELATIVELY SMALL SHIP TO BE USED FOR EXPLORATORY DRILLING IN CASPIAN SEA. THIS SHIP EMPLOYS TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED BY IFP BASED ON USE OF FLEXIBLE HOSE FOR CONTROL OF DRILLING BIT. ALTHOUGH FRENCH OFFERED TO PROVIDE INITIAL INSTRUCTION IN OPERATION OF THIS SYSTEM, SOVIETS REPORTEDLY REFUSED AND SIMPLY TOOK POSSESSION OF SHIP AT POINT OF CONSTRUCTION. FRENCH HAVE RECEIVED NO FURTHER WORD ON SUCCESS (OR LACK THEREOF) OF SHIP'S OPERATIONS. FRENCH EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT IF SOVIETS ARE SO SENSITIVE REGARDING OFFSHORE OPERATIONS IN CASPIAN, THEY WOULD DOUBTLESS BE MUCH LESS WILLING TO ALLOW PARTICIPATION BY FOREIGN SPECIALISTS IN AREA SUCH AS BARENTS SEA. IN THIS CONNECTION, FRENCH EMBOFF SAID CFP/ELF-ERAP WERE QUITE INTERESTED IN EXTENT TO WHICH SOVIETS WOULD BE PREPARED TO ALLOW GULF OIL TO USE ITS SPECIAL RESEARCH SHIP IN DEVELOPMENT OF SAKHALIN OFFSHORE DEPOSITS. COMMATT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT PROJECT DEPENDED UPON USE OF THIS SHIP AND THAT WE ASSUMED SOVIETS WOULD BE PREPARED TO ALLOW SHIP, TOGETHER WITH FOREIGN TECHNICIANS NEEDED, TO MAKE NECESSARY SURVEYS. STOESEL

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